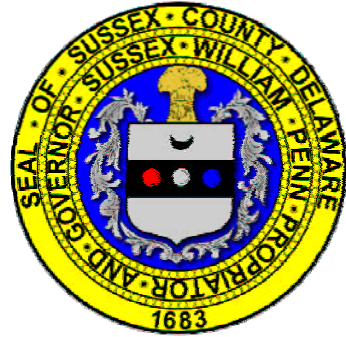


News Release



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Sussex County approves contractor for new 911 center project

GEORGETOWN, Del. – Sussex County is moving forward on its plans to build a larger, state-of-the-art 911 center.

Sussex County Council, at its Tuesday, Jan. 3, 2006, meeting, unanimously awarded Lincoln-based Richard Y. Johnson & Son Inc. a contract for \$7.1 million to build the new 18,000-square-foot 911 emergency operations center. Johnson & Son was the lower of two bidders for the project.

The new facility will be built about 350 yards from the current 911 emergency operations center, off Airport Road, at the public entrance to the Sussex County Airport near Georgetown.

Construction is expected to begin in April, and should be finished by June 2007.

The estimated \$12 million project, which will include a nearly \$4 million investment in radio and computer equipment by the state, will replace the 6,000-square foot building the emergency operations center has occupied since 1979.

Currently, county dispatchers work at the center to alert firefighters and medics to calls. State police dispatchers also work from the same location, dispatching troopers and other police. Both teams of dispatchers will move to the new building once it is completed.

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County officials have been planning the new complex for more than two years, and setting aside money in the last four capital budgets. Money to construct the new building is coming from the county's portion of the realty transfer tax, revenue that is generated by the sale of property.

Officials say the added space the new complex will provide and state-of-the-art technology it will feature are essential to meeting the demands of a growing population.

According to U.S. Census figures, Sussex County's population grew by nearly 40 percent between 1990 and 2000. "With the continued growth in population, we're handling more calls," said Emergency Operations Center Director Joseph Thomas.

The Sussex County 911 center took more than 93,000 emergency calls in 2005, up from at least 84,000 in 2004. Ten years ago, the number of 911 calls to the center was about 56,000. Thomas attributed the gain in the last 10-year period to the jump in population.

"We've basically outgrown where we are," Thomas said. "So we've got to increase our staffing, and subsequently our space, to accommodate the growth."

The current 911 center can house as many as nine dispatchers at any time. The new facility will have stations for as many as 15 dispatchers, with room to expand to 22 in the future, Thomas said.

The new building also will feature a dedicated area for emergency management stations during hurricanes, snowstorms and other disasters, and will be rated to withstand extreme winds up to 120 mph.

Sussex County Administrator Robert L. Stickels said the new facility is a "clear illustration of the county's willingness to jointly expand public safety services with the state of Delaware, at no additional cost, either to the state or the taxpayers."

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